

# INFANT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH

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Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership

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# Webinar Agenda

- What is infant mental health?
- Infant mental health within a public health framework
- System and cross system support for infant mental health: current status in Illinois

# What is Infant Mental Health?

Here is what it's **not**:



"Lahwaah, buwba buwbaah, gullygah abawaa mey ayeeayaah. Is that normal?"

# Definition of Infant Mental Health

Infant Mental Health is:

The developing capacity of the infant and toddler to...

- Form close and secure relationships.
- Experience, regulate, and express emotions.
- Explore the environment and learn.

...all in the context of family, community, and cultural expectations for young children.

(Zero to Three Infant Mental Health Task Force).

# Definition of Infant Mental Health

The emotional and social competence of infants and toddlers who are developing appropriately according to biology, social relationships and culture.



Charles Zeanah, M.D

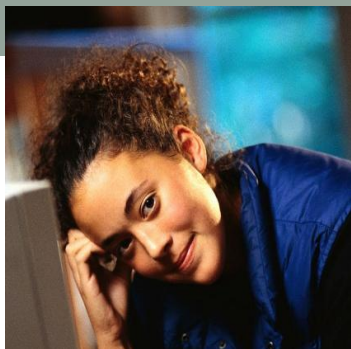
# The Science of Infant and Early Childhood Development

- Not nature VS nurture, but nature AND nurture
- Parents and other regular caregivers are environmental influences during early childhood
- Children's early development depends upon the health and well-being of their parents
- Early experiences affect the development of the brain



(From *Neurons to Neighborhoods* (2000) National Research Council Institute of Medicine)





# Guiding Principles

1. Infants are born with capacity and need for relatedness
2. Birth to three is critical for brain growth and formation of personality and sense of self
3. Pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting bring up past issues for parent



# Guiding Principles

4. Pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting bring up past issues for practitioner as well
5. Best picture of infant-parent relationship seen within family setting, home, and community
6. Culture and society influence infant-parent relationship



# Infant Brain Development and Its Connection to Relationships

- Our brains develop through relationships.
- Babies develop both verbally and non verbally.
- Babies respond to our words, our touch, our actions, etc.
- Babies are affected and shaped by experiences. Their relationships help define those experiences.



# Trauma: One domain of Infant Mental Health

- We recognize that early experiences affect the development of babies in all areas, including physical, cognitive, and social/emotional.
- Trauma impacts that development.
- Understanding trauma and how it affects children helps to guide our work with families.

# The effects on the fetus and newborn baby of stress during pregnancy

- Stress early in pregnancy can cause severe damage to the brain
- Severe stress during pregnancy affects the basic functioning of the brain and can cause a baby to be hard to soothe
- A hard to soothe baby can overwhelm an already stressed parent.

## OR ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING THIS:

“The truth about childhood is stored up in our bodies and lives in the depths of our souls. Our intellect can be deceived, our feelings can be numbed and manipulated, our perceptions shamed and confused, our bodies tricked with medication, but our soul never forgets. And because we are one, one whole soul in one body, someday our body will present its bill.”

Alice Miller, Swiss Psychoanalyst

# Infant Mental Health Within a Public Health Framework

- Promotion
- Prevention
- Early Identification
- Intervention

# PROMOTION AND PREVENTION

- Helping every parent understand how to support the healthy social and emotional development of their child.
- Helping every system that interfaces with children and their families maximize opportunities to support infant mental health.
- Helping the broad based community understand how to support and enhance the network of caregivers and their children



# EARLY IDENTIFICATION and INTERVENTION

- Helping all places where young children learn, live, and grow know how to recognize signs of distress and know how to deal with those within their system.
- If the system does not have the capacity to offer help in dealing with the distress, know where to refer.
- Help child serving programs know how to deal with challenging behaviors to prevent removal from that setting.

# Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation: One Early Intervention Strategy

Goal of consultation: To increase the capacity to prevent, identify, and respond to the mental health issues among children in their care.

Consultation is currently provided to early child care, educational programs, home visitors and families.

# Infant and Early Childhood Consultation

- Reflective consultation provided to the program supervisor
- Reflective consultation with staff as a group
- Reflective consultation with supervisor and staff
- Case consultation
- Home visit with the home visiting staff'
- Co-facilitate groups
- Regular meetings with consultants as a team and individually

# The Focus of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

- Always relationship based
- Always striving to keep the whole family system in mind: the child, parents, and the context in which they live
- Always strength based
- Always individualized
- Always striving to be continuous and stable
- Always striving to be culturally responsive
- Always stressing the importance of being self-aware, reflective, and being open to professional growth through reflective supervision and consultation



# INTERVENTION OR TREATMENT

- Help to remove the stigma of mental health, making it more comfortable to ask for help.
- Create a common understanding that mental health concerns can show up in very young children as they react to stress.
- Build and support a pool of practitioners that are skilled in the treatment of very young children.
- Promote an understanding of the impact of culture in treatment of young children and their families.

# What Is Happening in Illinois?

- Cross system collaboration
- Early identification and response
- Access and financing
- Capacity and competence of providers
- Public Awareness
  - A LOT!!



# Cross System Collaboration/Coordination

- Early Learning Council
- Early Childhood Committee of the ICMHP
- Illinois Childhood Trauma Coalition
- AOK networks across the state
- DCFS Waiver

# Early Learning Standards and Guidelines

- Illinois is one of many states to adopt Early Learning standards and Guidelines.
- Illinois includes social and emotional development in the standards.
- The standards help us to see how children develop and learn.
- Those standards have been recently reviewed and revised.
- Link to the guidelines:  
<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/earlychi/pdf/el-guidelines-0-3.pdf>

# Early Identification and Response

- Screenings for infants and young children and/or caregivers
  - Physicians
  - Child Care Settings
  - Home visiting programs
  - Schools
  - Mental Health Programs
  - Early Childhood Development Programs

# Access and Financing

What methods are there for supporting the work of infant/early childhood mental health?

- Federal, state and funding
- Medicaid: changes to Rule 132 to support infant mental health
- Private foundations
- Investing in young children: best return on public dollars
- Access is limited by public awareness, provider awareness, system capacity and public policies; limited use of EPSDT

# Provider competence and capacity

- Institutions of learning/ training centers
- PCP Project
- CMH Consultation Project
- Credential
- Consultation reflective learning groups and symposium
- Lack of qualified providers across the state

# Early Childhood Mental Health Credential (I/ECMH-C)

- In 2011-12 the credentialing system launched a pilot with 13 highly qualified individuals to build and test the developing system.
- A second cohort of IMH professionals are now working toward their credential.
- 10 month relationship-based process of discussing and analyzing their work utilizing the framework of the competencies
- For information on the credential go to the website of the Illinois Association for Infant Mental Health at [www.ilaimh.org](http://www.ilaimh.org)



# Public Awareness

## ICMHP Early Childhood Committee

Infant mental health public awareness campaign: the importance of social and emotional development for children to succeed in school and life, be healthy and enjoy financial stability in adulthood

## Say It Out Loud Campaign:

Removing the stigma of mental health and seeking help

# The Illinois Association for Infant Mental Health

- Volunteer-run, membership organization since 1981
  - over 200 members from across Illinois
- Chapters
  - Southern Illinois
  - Central Illinois
  - New Chapter starting in the Northwest region
- Multidisciplinary from a variety of fields and disciplines
  - education, social work, psychology, medicine, academia, public policy, child development, physical and occupational therapy, and other allied disciplines
- Affiliate of the World Association of Infant Mental Health

# ILAIMH Activities

- Fall Annual Conference in Chicago
- Spring seminar series throughout Illinois
- Quarterly (almost) newsletter
- Listserv that has over 500 active subscribers
- Reflective Supervision groups throughout state (beginning 2014)

# How Do I Join?

- Easy!!
- Membership
  - \$40 Individual
  - \$25 Student
  - Group memberships available
- Go to [www.ILAIMH.org](http://www.ILAIMH.org) for more information!

# Infant Mental Health

Emotional intelligence begins to develop in the earliest years. All the small exchanges children have with their parents, teachers, and with each other carry emotional messages.



Daniel Goleman

# For More Information

Some useful resources:

Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership

[www.icmhp.org](http://www.icmhp.org)

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Illinois Association of Infant Mental Health

[www.ILAIMH.org](http://www.ILAIMH.org)

Illinois State Board of Education

[www.isbe.net](http://www.isbe.net)